

# *A Compendium of Essays*

Purcell, Hogarth and Handel, Beethoven,  
Liszt, Debussy, and Andrew Lloyd Webber

*E.A. Bucchianeri*

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Debussy, and Andrew Lloyd Webber*

*E. A. Bucchianeri*



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**“The fire which seems out  
often sleeps beneath the cinders.”**


**Pierre Corneille**

## **Books by the same Author**

Handel's Path to Covent Garden

Faust: My Soul be Damned for the World

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## Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*: A Musical Exemplum for Young Gentlewomen

Henry Purcell's opera *Dido and Aeneas* (1689) has intrigued and fascinated many musicologists and music lovers through the years. This is the only opera he composed with a musical score that contains no spoken dialogue in contrast to his semi-operas, and to this day, is considered one of the finest examples of English Baroque opera. Composed for the young ladies of an elite Chelsea boarding school, it fell into obscurity after its premiere and did not resurface again until 1700, revived to fit an adaptation of Shakespeare's play *Measure for Measure*.<sup>1</sup> According to the *Oxford Companion to Music*, the original opera did not appear in a restored form for the stage until 1895.<sup>2</sup> Why did producers overlook *Dido and Aeneas* for so long?

Curtis Price offers some possible explanations concerning this operatic oversight in his introduction to the *Norton Critical Score* edition. He suggests it may have been suppressed as contemporary London audiences could have objected to opera featuring continuous singing, and he also proposes Purcell possibly suppressed his own work due to its experimental form.<sup>3</sup> Price surmises the political

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<sup>1</sup> Curtis Price, ed., *A Norton Critical Score, Henry Purcell, Dido and Aeneas, An Opera* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1986), p. ix.

<sup>2</sup> Percy A. Scholes, *The Oxford Companion to Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1943), p. 62.

<sup>3</sup> *Norton Score*, *ibid.*

implication connected with the libretto, written by Nahum Tate, is the most obvious cause for its apparent suppression from the operatic stage. He recalls the arguments of John Buttrey who stated that many of the major English operatic works during 1656–1695 were specifically composed to praise the monarchy if not the monarch.<sup>4</sup> According to Price's observations, the subject of *Dido and Aeneas* derived from Virgil's classic *Aeneid* contained unflattering connotations to the reigning monarchs, William and Mary (1689–95). In the original tale, Aeneas of Troy has set sail for Italy; his destiny is to establish a new nation, however, his ships, blown off course by a tempest, arrive at an African port and he receives a hospitable welcome from the Carthaginians. Queen Dido, enamoured by his tales of adventure, falls in love and plans to marry him. During a hunting entertainment, an approaching storm forces them to seek shelter in a cave where they have an illicit affair. Subsequently, Jupiter dispatches Mercury to Aeneas who warns him to continue his journey and leave Carthage. He prepares for his voyage secretly without informing Queen Dido, who nevertheless discovers his deceit. He ignores her pleadings to remain with her and she suffers a tragic death by her own hand. Price remarks, "The story of a prince who seduces and abandons a neurotic queen would seem a tactless way to honor the new monarchs."<sup>5</sup>

Price maintains these unfortunate associations were the main cause for Tate's criticised censorship of the plot.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid. pp. 6–7.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p. 6.

“... Tate was forced to adapt the classical tale, already deeply entwined with the supposed origins of the British monarchy, to disengage Queen Mary from a symbolic link with Queen Dido. This required major changes of plot, motivation, and characterisation. I believe that the gaping ambiguities in the libretto — the reason for Dido’s grief in Act I, the uncertain consummation of the couple’s love in Act II, the enchantresses’ unmotivated hatred of the queen, and even the manner of Dido’s death — are owing directly to the potentially sensitive nature of the allegory. Had Tate followed Virgil as closely as in *Brutus of Alba*, faithfully depicting the queen’s obsessive love for Aeneas, their winter of debauchery, her paralysing guilt, extreme bitterness, and blazing anger at his departure, eyebrows would have been raised from Chelsea to Whitehall.”<sup>6</sup>

It is possible this allegorical association, despite the censorship of the original drama, was a leading factor in the suppression of this opera. Virgil’s classic would have been familiar to audiences of the day and the unfortunate associations with the plot would still hold true. Purcell was wise not to have this work produced more than once; it may have been construed as an insult to the reigning monarchs regardless of the alterations Tate made to the original epic.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid. pp. 8–9.

However, this association may not be the only reason the opera's revival did not take place much sooner in its original form, nor does it fully explain the ambiguities and the alterations of the plot and characterisation. We may consider these allegorical references a *secondary reason* for the opera's descent into near oblivion. Upon reading the various historical essays and contributions concerning *Dido and Aeneas* contained within the *Norton Critical Score* edition, I was quite surprised to find not one featured a commentary on the epilogue written by Thomas Durfey that was recited at the premiere.

### The Epilogue

All that we know the angels do above,  
I've read, is that they sing and that they love,  
The vocal part we have tonight perform'd  
And if by Love our hearts are not yet warm'd  
Great Providence has still more bounteous been  
To save us from these grand deceivers, men.  
Here blest with innocence, and peace of mind,  
Not only bred to virtue, but inclin'd;  
We flourish, and defy all human kind.  
Art's curious garden thus we learn to know,  
And here secure from nipping blasts we grow,  
Let the vain fop range o'er yon vile lewd town,  
Learn play-house wit, and vow 'tis all his own;  
Let him cock, huff, strut, ogle, lie, and swear  
How he's admired by such and such a player;

All's one to us, his charms have here no power;  
Our hearts have just the temper as before;  
Besides, to show we live with strictest rules,  
Our nunnery-door is charm'd to shut out fools;  
No love-toy here can pass to private view,  
Nor China orange cramm'd with billet doux,  
Rome may allow strange tricks to please her sons,  
But we are Protestants and English nuns;  
Like nimble fawns, and birds that bless the spring  
Unscarr'd by turning times we dance and sing;  
We hope to please, but if some critic here  
Fond of wit, designs to be severe,  
Let not his patience be worn out too soon;  
In a few years we shall all be in tune.<sup>7</sup>

This epilogue may be the key to unlock the mysteries concerning *Dido and Aeneas*, our main observation centres on its subject and nature.

(...)

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p.76. The Epilogue first appeared in Durfey's *New Poems* (1689): "Epilogue to the Opera of Dido and Aeneas, perform'd at Mr. Preist's Boarding School at Chelsea; Spoken by the Lady Dorothy Burk."

## Hogarth, Handel, and ‘The Levée’ from ‘The Rake’s Progress’: A Satirical Portrait Worth a Thousand Words

William Hogarth’s *The Rake’s Progress* (completed 1734) is a fascinating series of eight paintings depicting the artist’s cynical view of London society. In sequence, the pictures portray the fictitious story of Tom Rakewell, a young man who has inherited a substantial fortune from his miserly father. Having little or no experience in handling money, Tom embarks on a life of debauchery. These pictures relate his ‘progression’ from a life of wanton vice to abject poverty, ultimately ending his days in the notorious insane asylum, Bedlam.

The second painting of the series entitled *The Rake’s Levée* may be of particular interest to Handel scholars. The Rake, now a man of society, is busy squandering his newly gained wealth to acquire a genteel façade in keeping with his new worldly status. However, the tradesmen who attend to his requirements are only interested in relieving Tom of the burden of his newfound wealth. The figure seated at the harpsichord is identified as Handel; the initials F. H. are painted on the score he apparently is presenting to Tom. The figures surrounding Tom may depict several recognisable contemporaries. The man brandishing the *fluret* sword may be the fencing master Dubois; next to him stands a man holding what

appears to be quarter-staffs and thereby has been recognised as the prize fighter James Figg.<sup>8</sup> The gentleman in the background holding the large leather-bound book on Tom's right is thought to be Charles Bridgeman, a member of Lord Burlington's social circle; perhaps he is suggesting to the Rake he acquire a country estate.<sup>9</sup>

The remaining sycophants include a man recognised as a French dance master due to his extravagant attire and pose (middle foreground), a huntsman blowing his horn, a kneeling jockey presenting a trophy he won at Epsom for riding his mount 'Silly Tom' to victory, and a hired assassin presenting a letter of introduction reading "Sr. the Capt. is a Man of Honour. his Sword may Serve you Yrs. Wm. Stab." Tom's interest in this dubious figure portrays his lack of wisdom and worldly intelligence, and presents an ill omen for his future. In the background, an additional group of tradesmen wait patiently to be received by the Rake.

Tom's pretence of gentility and his misconceived aristocratic aspirations is evident by his uncouth preference in art. A mediocre painting of foreign manufacture entitled *The Judgement of Paris* has been sold to Tom as a masterpiece, which he has distastefully displayed between portraits of his gamecocks.<sup>10</sup>

This is the traditionally accepted interpretation of *The Rake's Levée*, however, on closer inspection, we may detect a greater significance in its historical symbolism. This painting was completed in 1733–34, the opera season which witnessed Handel's relocation to Covent Garden and the formation of the Opera of the

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<sup>8</sup> Neil McWilliam, *Hogarth* (London: Studio Editions, 1993), p. 66.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Sean Shesgreen, ed., *Engravings by Hogarth; 101 Prints* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1973), # 29.





Engraving of the 'The Levée'

Nobility company; possibly, Hogarth sarcastically depicted this contemporary operatic upheaval in London.

In 1729, after the Royal Academy of Music folded, John Jacob Heidegger, the manager of the King's Theatre in the Haymarket, entered into an agreement with Handel whereby they would continue the production of Italian opera in London for at least five years. The company splintered in 1733 as tensions mounted between Handel and the castrato Senesino; accordingly, Handel dismissed the troublesome performer, who immediately joined the rival company formed by previous directors of the Royal Academy, including Lord Burlington and several members of his circle. Later, Heidegger leased the King's Theatre to the rival company, forcing Handel to seek a different venue after July 1734, namely, Covent Garden managed by John Rich. Consequently, fierce competition emerged between the Nobility Opera and Handel's company at Covent Garden. Unfortunately for Handel, the rival company was openly supported by the Prince of Wales and thereby was considered fashionable by the public. The rival directors had also achieved considerable theatrical *coups* by enticing other singers away from Handel's company, and instrumentalists from his orchestra including the trumpeter Valentine Snow.<sup>11</sup> The rival company had also managed to engage the famous castrato Farinelli for their second season commencing in December of 1734. Handel had employed two castrati, Scalzi and Carestini, in an attempt to compete with the new company, yet Farinelli eclipsed all their endeavours.

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<sup>11</sup> Christopher Hogwood, *Handel* (New York: Thames and Hudson Inc., 1984, 1988, 1995), p. 125.

Hogarth may have depicted the rivalry of the two companies in *The Rake's Levée*, apparently, both factions are attempting to persuade Tom Rakewell to sponsor their opera company.

(...)

# **The Symphonies of Beethoven.**

## **Historical and Philosophical Reflections through Music**

We accept that Beethoven's symphonies are a product of his times and generally reflect the cultural, social, and political environment from which they emerged. Despite this acknowledgement it is evident Beethoven's works are not infallibly indicative of historical occurrences and sequential events; they were ultimately a medium of personal expression and as such may be considered his personal commentary or philosophical chronicles expressed through music. Consequently, when examining these works, a completely accurate portrait of history is not presented; alternatively, we are contemplating contemporary events presented as fragmented glimpses of historical facts mingled with personal interpretations and philosophical perceptions by the composer. By examining a selection of his symphonies in chronological order we may deduce how his perception relating to contemporary events and social changes evolved through his music.

☞ **Symphony No. 1 in C major, Op. 21**  
**(1800; Dedicated to Baron van Swieten)**

☞ **Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 36**  
**(1801–1802; Dedicated to Prince Lichnowsky)**

When we consider the dedications of these symphonies, we are introduced to the aristocratic circle Beethoven socialised in and those who may have influenced him. Baron van Swieten receives Beethoven's first symphonic dedication; one of the important promoters of the 'serious music' culture of Vienna and the philosophical concept of the 'genius-composer'.<sup>12</sup> Prince Lichnowsky, the recipient of the dedication of Symphony No. 2, was also one of the promoters of this music culture.<sup>13</sup> As a diplomat to Berlin in 1769, Baron van Swieten was influenced by the *Sturm und Drang* movement already well established promoting the notion of glorifying the emotions in opposition to the ideals of the Age of Enlightenment that endorsed scientific methods and the primacy of reason.<sup>14</sup> The concepts of the 'creative-genius' and 'organic growth' with regard to creative works first developed in Northern Germany during the 1770s and 1780s.<sup>15</sup> These ideals were fuelled by the translation of a first-century Greek treatise attributed to Longinus entitled *On the Sublime*.<sup>16</sup> This treatise outlines Longinus' views on genius, inspiration, and the characteristics denoting those of 'noble minds'. According to Longinus, the 'Sublime' stems from five sources; the ability to form grand conceptions, the stimulus of powerful and inspired emotion, an appropriate use of figurative language, noble diction and imagery, and the arrangement of words

<sup>12</sup> Dr. Christopher Morris, Classical Period Lectures 'The Symphonies of Beethoven', October 27 1998.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Tia De Nora, 'Beethoven and the Construction of Genius', *Musical Politics in Vienna, 1729-1803*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995), p. 23.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p. 23.

<sup>16</sup> Lectures, October 13, 1998.

in speech leading to a total effect of dignity and elevation.<sup>17</sup> Whereas these ideals centred within the literary circles, the musical life of Berlin in the 1700s also reflected these theories of artistic greatness.<sup>18</sup> The *Sturm und Drang* period was influenced by Edmund Burke's work *A Philosophical Enquiry into the origin of our ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*. (London 1757) which expanded the theory of the 'Sublime' by comparing it with the wonders of nature. He characterises the 'Sublime' as large and unfathomable, rough and rugged, terrifying and painful, without actually experiencing this intangible state; for instance, we can be terrified by an earthquake without having to live through the actual experience. In effect, the 'sublime' cannot be comprehended but marvelled at, while 'Beauty' is comprehensible and pleasurable, remaining 'small' and 'smoothly-polished'.<sup>19</sup> Immanuel Kant in his work *Critique of Judgement* (Berlin / Libau 1790) supported Burke's philosophy, but preferred to categorise the infinite and unfathomable as the 'mathematically sublime', and the 'terrifying' element as the 'dynamically sublime'.<sup>20</sup> In addition, we observe the expressive free-form *Phantasie* circulating at this time in Northern Germany.<sup>21</sup>

We know Baron van Swieten joined the local music circle in Berlin for he encouraged the promotion of C. P. E. Bach's music and subsequently introduced it to music publishers in Vienna.<sup>22</sup> When van Swieten returned to Vienna in 1777, the ideals associated with the *Sturm und Drang* movement were in the process of development,

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> *Construction of Genius*, p. 24.

<sup>19</sup> Lectures, 1998.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> *Construction of Genius*, *ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

and he promoted these new concepts with a small group of supporters. The first indications of this ‘noble style’, as Tia De Nora points out, appear in the later works of Mozart c.1780s. Mozart collaborated with van Swieten at this time, and a noticeable change in his music emerged. His later compositions reflected difficult styles, as in counterpoint, and received mixed reviews by audiences.<sup>23</sup> During the Gallant and early Classical period, the heavily ornamented Baroque fugal method was frequently circumvented in favour of a lyrical style — the former was considered an antiquated style associated with church music, and therefore assumed the status of high art. One writer for the *Magazin der Musik*, a long time admirer who formerly praised Mozart’s work, wrote in 1787:

“The most skilful and best keyboard scholar I have ever heard; the pity is only that he aims too high in his artful and truly beautiful compositions, in order to become a new creator, whereby it must be said that feeling and heart profit little.”<sup>24</sup>

De Nora asserts this indicates the momentum van Swieten and his minority group were achieving in the cultural circles of Vienna.

Ironically, the ideals of the ‘Sublime’ promoted by van Swieten and his associates blossomed and flourished in the most unexpected manner. This transpired with the dissolution of the aristocratic Hofkapelle and Hauskapellen where the nobility patronised private orchestras for their own entertainment, not

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid. pp. 13–15.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p. 13.

caused by an impoverished aristocracy, but attributed to the fashionable changes in Austria.<sup>25</sup> The Imperial Court no longer considered their Hofkapelle exclusive due to the numerous Hauskapellen patronised by the nobility imitating the Imperial Court, and as a result, the Hofkapelle disbanded. The nobility considered this a fashionable statement and followed the Imperial example by dissolving their Hauskapellen.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Lectures, October 27, 1998.  
*Construction of Genius*, p. 40.

<sup>26</sup> Lectures, *ibid.*  
*Construction of Genius*, p. 41.



# **Liszt, Goethe, the *Faust Symphony*, and the Symphonic Poem: ‘The Word Must Become the Deed’**

Goethe’s literary classic, *Faust*, has seldom failed to mesmerise those who read it; many are held captive by the fundamental intrinsic nature of this work portraying a man’s insatiable search for knowledge and happiness, regardless of the cost, even to the ultimate sacrifice of his own immortal soul. This magnetic fascination is possibly explained by the observation this classic tale touches a ‘raw nerve’, as we perceive a reflection of our own weaknesses and failures polemically combined with our aspirations or higher nature associated with the protagonists of the plot. Goethe’s intriguing opus had a spellbinding effect on many composers of the Romantic Era, including Beethoven, Berlioz, Wagner, and Gounod; — Franz Liszt proved no exception as he too fell under the hypnotic power of this compelling story.

## **The Faust Legend**

The tale of Faust has a basis in fact, however, like many legends, the details became clouded through years of storytelling and continual adaptation. The historical Faust, Georgius 'Sabellicus' Faustus (1480? – 1538?), according to the various legends, was a German fortune teller and magician who performed marvels as he

travelled though Thuringia.<sup>27</sup> In 1509, he supposedly received a degree at Heidelberg University, and he was thereafter, referred to as 'Dr. Faustus'.<sup>28</sup> Rumours related he was a schoolteacher in the various University cities of Germany and many contemporary scholars referred to him as a charlatan.<sup>29</sup> Several accounts maintain Faustus was patronised by the Archbishop of Cologne in 1532 and accordingly became a citizen of respectability, although this has not been proven. Incidentally, leaders of the Reformation such as Martin Luther believed he had supernatural powers.<sup>30</sup> By the late sixteenth century, these legends were widely circulated; many tales dating from medieval times relating the powers of pseudoscientists and magicians became synonymous with the name 'Faustus' or 'Faust'.<sup>31</sup>

The first literature entitled *Histora von Dr. Johann Fausten* relating the Faustian legend was printed in Frankfurt in 1587, and featured the original account of Faust's pact with the devil. According to this narrative, the scholar Faust made a compact with the devil; Faust agreed to sell his soul and in return, he would receive the restoration of youth, an increased knowledge of the occult, be granted considerable power and experience all worldly pleasures. This account relates when the allotted time of twenty-four years expired, he repented having sold his soul for illusory knowledge, but

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<sup>27</sup> Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt; The Weimar Years, 1848–1861*, Vol. II (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1989), p. 328. For more detailed information on the historical Faust, see E.A. Bucchianeri, *Faust: My Soul be Damned for the World Vol. 1* (Batalha Publishers: 2010).

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> 'Faust', *Microsoft Multimedia Encyclopedia Encarta* (U.S.A.: Microsoft Corporation, 1992–1994)

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

to no avail; the devil would not relinquish the compact and dragged his soul to the fiery depths of Hell.

The first translation appeared in English in 1587 and in German verse in 1588, and later in 1592 as written prose with the text in English and French. Christopher Marlowe wrote his famous drama *The Tragedy of Doctor Faustus* in 1589 based on a recent translation of the Faustus legend.<sup>32</sup> English players brought Marlowe's drama to Germany where it was adapted by other drama companies, parodied in farcical productions, and ultimately degenerated to a puppet show. This puppet show introduced Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) to the story, which captured his imagination.<sup>33</sup> For many years, Goethe struggled writing his own adaptation of the legend; the First Part was completed in 1808, and the Second Part was published a year after his death in 1833.

Goethe's version remains the predominant literary account of the Faustian Legend; he introduces the character of Gretchen and the important detail that Faust is not condemned to eternal damnation, but is saved by Gretchen's intercession. We may attribute the appeal of this version to Goethe's apparent personal affiliation with the legendary story and his empathy with Faust's character. Goethe once wrote:

“The significant puppet-play legend ... echoed  
and buzzed in many tones within me. I too had  
drifted about in all knowledge, and early experiments  
in life, and had always come back more unsatisfied

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Charles W. Eliot, ed., *The Harvard Classics*, Vol. 19, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, “Faust, Part I,” (New York: P.F. Collier and Son Corporation, 1963), p.6.

and more tormented. I was now carrying these things, like many others, about with me and delighting myself with them in lonely hours, but without writing anything down.”<sup>34</sup>

Goethe was haunted by his personal conflicts, and arguably, his apparent struggle to portray them with the character of Faust may have been the key factor in the creation of the “Faustian Conflict.” Goethe breathed life into the character of Faust through his own experiences, and thus created a convincing, realistic individual. In Goethe’s version of the legend, Faust agrees to sell his soul on one condition; that the devil can prove he has the capability of giving him the happiness and knowledge he seeks. Faust is not predestined for Hell for he uses his soul as the bargaining power enabling him to retain an escape clause. Faust is not portrayed as a demonic character but a man searching to fulfil his ambition to acquire absolute truth through knowledge not attainable to mortal man who is fettered on earth. In the event the devil can comply with the condition of the contract, he must relinquish his soul. Ultimately, Faust represents Man striving to find the true meaning and happiness of life.

Goethe’s introduction of Gretchen was inspired by a real-life incident concerning a young woman who had been seduced and abandoned, ultimately killing her illegitimate child. She was condemned to death and her contrite lover joined her in prison to die with her.<sup>35</sup> In Goethe’s drama, Faust seduces Gretchen, absolutely

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Paul Brians, Department of English, Washington State University, September 2000. Website; — [http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~brians/hum\\_303/faust.html](http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~brians/hum_303/faust.html)

destroying her. She bears his illegitimate child whom she drowns in a tirade of madness, is condemned to death, and Faust attempts to rescue her. In moments of sanity, she realises Faust is in league with the Powers of Darkness, she begs God for forgiveness, and is saved at the conclusion of Part I.

Faust continues his search for knowledge and truth in Part II, and in the process, builds a kingdom on land reclaimed from the sea.<sup>36</sup> When his death approaches, he describes his dream of a land and a people that are free.<sup>37</sup> Faust senses this dream may come true in the future and cries out the fateful sentence, "Stay, thou art fair!" Yet, his soul is not lost for he discovers the true idealistic 'fair' does not yet exist. As a spirit of negation and destruction, the devil is not capable of creating this 'Utopian' dream and cannot grant Faust's desires. The contract cannot be fulfilled and Faust is saved from damnation. The angels state, "Who ever strives with all his power, / we are allowed to save."<sup>38</sup> Gretchen intercedes for his soul, and he is elevated to Heaven by the angels; the last lines of the play read "Eternal womanhood draws us onward."<sup>39</sup> Faust is saved by his ceaseless search for knowledge and truth, and his love for Gretchen.<sup>40</sup>

Goethe's unique interjection of human aspirations and conflicting emotions to the Faustian legend resulted in a drama that we can identify with. We also confront similar temptations and

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<sup>36</sup> Nicholas Vazonyi, 'Liszt, Goethe, and the Faust Symphony', *Journal of the American Liszt Society*, 40 (1996), p. 2.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Paul Brians, *ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> For a detailed study of Goethe's Faust, see E.A. Bucchianeri, *Faust: My Soul be Damned for the World*, Vol. 2 (Batalha Publishers: 2010).

emotional conflicts in our daily lives; we may observe our own reflections through this particular story of Faust. It was inevitable composers would be attracted to this legendary classic and be allured by the temptation to set this epic drama to music.

### **Liszt and the “Faustian Conflict”**

Franz Liszt was born in Hungary in 1811 and died at Bayreuth in 1886. He received his first piano lessons from his father, and later studied with Czerny, becoming one of the world’s most famous musicians. His skill as a performer astounded audiences, earning him fabulous fortunes from which he gave generously to charity. Upon reaching the pinnacle of his concert career, he renounced it in favour of a court position at Weimar in 1849. He relocated to Rome in 1861, and in 1865, took minor orders of the Church. Perpetually on the move between Weimar, Rome and Budapest, he continued teaching and performing. Apparently, Liszt was in a continual polemic conflict, yearning for a glorious career in the limelight in contrast to his craving for seclusion to allow time for composition. Oswald Barrett (‘Batt’) describes Liszt as a man who had internal conflicts and a restless nature:

“Two opposing forces were continually at war within him. He revelled in the glamour he created, but when satiated with all this he would shut himself away from the world, full of disgust, the desire to write great works strong upon him. Then his delight in the world’s applause would prove too strong; he

longed again to see fashionable society at his feet and he would emerge again from his isolation.

In his last years his ranking discontent made him more than ever restless. He travelled incessantly, urged on, it would seem, by a burning desire to make amends, for he gave his services wherever they could be applied to a useful purpose, as he had for long given all his lessons free of charge. He was, at heart, a grand old man, yet ever haunted by the spectre of 'the idle uselessness that frets me'.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Oswald Barrett ('Batt'), 'Liszt the Traveller', Plate 93, ed. Percy A. Scholes, *The Oxford Companion to Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1942).

## Orientalism, Music, and Debussy: West Meets East

For centuries, Europeans erected an invisible barrier between the West and the East supported by the academic field of Orientalism. The intended purpose of this branch of study was to collect information and obtain knowledge of the Orient; later Western countries used this acquired knowledge to aid in colonization campaigns and facilitate the occupation and management of countries considered inferior to Western culture. The generally accepted concept was the greater the knowledge, the greater the power and control that could be exerted over nations classified as primitive.<sup>42</sup> The West viewed the East as a dark, mysterious, and barbaric world due to its various pagan customs and seemingly 'backward' governmental systems. Gradually, Orientalism influenced the public's imagination and the world of art, music and literature; although, it is difficult to imagine the ethereal art of music could be susceptible to the darker aspects of human nature such as stereotyping, prejudicial labelling and racism.

Due to Orientalism, composers depicted the East as comical, or a land of fantasy; the East was romanticised as a region shrouded by the ambience of the fantastic and mystique, thus becoming the land of dreams and fairytales. In essence, music influenced by Orientalism in the Romantic Era exemplifies how the West viewed

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<sup>42</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (England: Pantheon Books, St. Ives plc., 1978), p. 36.



the East with the implementation of stylistic devices rather than experimentation with Eastern musical traditions for the purpose of cultural exchange. In contrast to this prejudicial outlook, Claude Debussy was one of the first influential Western composers to display a genuine interest in the Javanese Gamelan, the orchestra of Java, and believed Western music could benefit from the study of Javanese tradition.<sup>43</sup> In the course of this essay, we will explore the development of Orientalism and examine its influence and effects on Western music, including Debussy's avant-garde approach and interpretations.

Orientalism originally emerged from fear of the unknown and the threat of invasion. After Mohammed's death in 632, the religion and culture of Islam rapidly disseminated through military occupation. Muslim invaders first captured Persia, Syria, Egypt, Turkey and North Africa. During the eighth and ninth centuries, their conquests extended to Spain, Sicily and regions of France, and by the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, India, Indonesia and China fell under Islamic rule. European countries were alarmed at the expansion of Islam; this religion and its culture symbolised terror and destruction by pagan barbaric armies and Europeans regarded this fearful situation with awe. Until the end of the seventeenth century, this fear of danger lurked ominously close to European borders in the form of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>44</sup> According to European schools of thought, the acquisition of knowledge became vital for the survival of Christian Europe. This quest for knowledge commenced with the Church Council of Vienne in 1312 which established a series of chairs in Arabic, Greek, Hebrew and Syriac in places of

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<sup>43</sup> Neil Sorrel, *A Guide to the Gamelan* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1990), p. 2.

<sup>44</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, p. 59.

academic learning such as Paris, Oxford, Bologna, Avignon and Salamanca.<sup>45</sup>

During the Middle Ages and the early Renaissance period, a savage portrayal of Islam became intensified through a variety of mediums such as poetry, general superstition and prejudice. By the middle of the fifteenth century, Europeans reached a consensus that action was obviously necessary to oppose this threat. In 1450–1460, Aeneas Silvius (Pope Pius II), John of Segovia, Nicholas of Cusa, and Jean Germain held a conference to determine a possible solution; although they failed to reach an agreement, Edward Said states this conference exemplifies a major attempt to contrast the Orient with European culture.<sup>46</sup>

From the seventeenth century, the acquisition of knowledge concerning the Orient became primarily the task of the Orientalists, who thereby influenced European perceptions of the East with their writings. To all intents and purposes, the Orientalists were propagandists; their information was not always truthful, accurate, or factual as they utilised superstition and myth to present their findings. Hence, the knowledge that the Europeans gained and accepted of the Orient was either half-truth or imaginative documentation. A prime example of this misrepresentation of the East is prefigured with Barthelémy d'Herbelot's posthumously published work *Bibliothèque Oriental* (1697). With the exception of Johann H. Hottinger's book *Historia Orientalis* (1651), the *Bibliothèque* remained the established official reference book concerning Oriental culture in Europe until the early nineteenth

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid. pp. 49–50.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. p. 61.

century.<sup>47</sup> Ironically, d'Herbelot did not attempt to correct the commonly held beliefs and misconceptions concerning the East; he merely listed all previously known places, names, and vague histories of Levantine and Islamic culture in alphabetical order, and in doing so endorsed the false impressions entertained by Europeans as factual information. This work set the precedence for future Orientalists; their task was to confirm the accepted stereotyping of Western superiority rather than present truthful and unbiased accounts. Finally, the field of Orientalism became firmly established; in an attempt to understand the Orient, Europeans referenced their information from the work of the 'knowledgeable' Orientalists as Westerners did not refer to the original Oriental sources but preferred to depend on the misinformation offered by these accepted academic experts.<sup>48</sup>

During the nineteenth century, Orientalism blossomed resulting from the various colonial wars fought between England and France, particularly with Napoleon's campaigns. The Orient attracted Napoleon in his youth; his early writings contain a summary of Marigny's *History of the Arabs*, and he wrote of the past glories of Alexander the Great, paying particular attention to the conquest of Egypt. Apparently, the dream to reconquer Egypt as a new Alexander proved tempting, particularly when this campaign would afford him the opportunity to strategically acquire a colony at the expense of England; Egypt was the gateway to the British Oriental Empire.<sup>49</sup> As a requisite to carry out this strategy, Napoleon gathered

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid. p. 65.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. pp. 66–67.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. pp. 76, 80.

the necessary intelligence concerning Egypt and the Orient, and in doing so, relied on the expertise of the Orientalists.

(...)

# Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Phantom of the Opera*. An Example of the 'Musical Theatre Renaissance'

The modern day musical has become a particularly perplexing genre to contemplate and study. We are not presented with the popular post war variety dance 'skits' of the *Ziegfield Follies* which lacked a coherent dramatic plot, or 'musical plays' that incorporate musical numbers, e.g. *The King and I*, *Oklahoma*, *South Pacific*, *My Fair Lady*, etc., although these musicals are revived today. Ultimately, musical theatre became classified as a 'low-brow', popular entertainment for the masses in contrast to Classical opera. During the 1970s, and particularly the 1980s, musicals evolved into a new echelon — one might dare to call this era the "Musical Theatre Renaissance." Productions featured greater emphasis on the music with less importance placed on spoken dialogue similar to Classical opera tradition, and dance in general was gradually limited to apt sections of the plot if possible, i.e. if a scene is set at a ball, or if it was intended as a full musical dance production such as *CATS*. In addition, musicals also evolved as part of the popular culture scene, incorporating music styles such as rock and jazz, and cinematic influences regarding music and scenic production methods. Thus, a great divide exists concerning the exact nature of the modern day musical and where this form may be categorised culturally and academically. Are musicals modern day operas or a new genre for a

new age? Are they a mere spectator entertainment, or do they have more to offer culturally?

I will attempt to address these various issues, selecting Lord Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical *The Phantom of the Opera* (1986) as an example of this evolutionary musical style. This choice will hardly surprise the reader, as Lloyd Webber is a giant within the musical theatre world; his works have been enjoyed and loved by millions despite the scathing criticisms hurled at his compositions. In 1982, he became the first composer to have three musicals running simultaneously in both New York and London; a truly amazing record he has continually repeated.<sup>50</sup> A concentration on just one of Lloyd Webber's works may not be considered the most appropriate procedure for studying the modern musical as it may be argued each musical is unique in its style, and one composition is not representative of the genre as a whole. However, the same observation may be associated with the practise of collecting information through opinion polls; only a selection of the public are asked for their opinions, yet the polls aid in presenting a general view of the populace and are continually used as a research procedure. We may consider the choice of *Phantom* as a selective representation; it contains many features now typical characteristics of the modern musical. In addition, this particular work was a major mile stone in Lloyd Webber's career as a composer; Michael Walsh points out that *Phantom* is the first musical where Lloyd Webber concentrated on key relationships within the score which illustrates a notable progressive leap from his earlier compositions.<sup>51</sup> In

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<sup>50</sup> Programme note, *The Phantom of the Opera*, Theatreprint, Great Britain.

<sup>51</sup> Michael Walsh, *Andrew Lloyd Webber; His Life and Works* (New York: Harry N. Adams Inc., 1997), p. 202.

October 1998, during an interview on the *Late Late Show* in Ireland, Lloyd Webber stated he loved all his musicals, but *Phantom* was particularly special to him. These factors contributed to the decision in selecting *Phantom* as a primary example of the modern day musical for this study.

When commencing the research for this essay I noticed many striking similarities with Wagnerian operatic culture concerning the categorisation of music of modernity, Lloyd Webber's *Phantom of the Opera*, the original story of the Phantom by Gaston Leroux, and the development of the modern musical. The German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), declared that works of modernity displayed a polarisation of two extremes.<sup>52</sup> He concluded that Richard Wagner's operas were the best examples of the term 'modernity' owing to the two extremes of hystericism, (symbolised by effects, chromaticism, and feminisation of the drama and music), and asceticism (reflecting idealism, diatonic harmony, and religion in music), found within them. Nietzsche concludes works reflecting modernity are constructed with great contrasts and polarities that narrowly manage to remain stable within the composition to form a complete entity. I will refrain from stating that the modern musical contains 'sick' elements as Nietzsche harshly claimed was a feature of Wagner's music due to these polarities! However, we may observe similar contrasts concerning the Classical music / popular culture argument associated with the modern musical. Classical music may be interpreted as the ascetic, 'serious religious' element, while popular culture and the cinematic influences within musicals may be regarded the 'hysterical' element due to the implementation of

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<sup>52</sup> Dr. Christopher Morris, Lectures, April 19, 1999.

special effects to capture mass appeal. In contrast to Nietzsche's opinion that polarities within works of modernity are in a state of repulsion, thus creating tension within the musical structure and the semblance of unity, I suggest the polarities within the modern musical are positive rather than negative factors as they pulsate a magnetic attraction and thus work in harmony while remaining recognisable as separate entities. These factors concerning the theory of modernity suggest that the modern musical has evolved from traditional classical opera to a new genre reflecting our contemporary era.

The German philosopher Theodor Adorno (1903–69) recognised that Wagner's operas were precursors of the film industry, hence we observe a connection between Classical 'high art' and 'low-brow' popular culture. Adorno wrote in his work *In Search of Wagner*:

"Thus we see that the evolution of the opera, and in particular the autonomous sovereignty of the artists, is intertwined with the origins of the culture industry. Nietzsche, in his youthful enthusiasm, failed to recognise the artwork of the future in which we witness the birth of film out of the spirit of music."<sup>53</sup>

Adorno also considered that Wagner's use of the *leitmotiv* system, i.e. the organic development of music through musical motifs

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<sup>53</sup> Theodor Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, trans. Rodney Livingstone, (London: 1985), p.107, in David Huckvale, 'The Composing Machine; Wagner and Popular Culture', ed. Jeremy Tambling, *A Night at the Opera, Media Representations of Opera* (London, John Libbey and Co., Ltd., 1994), pp.116–117.



as a method to introduce a character's emotions or to represent a symbolic idea, had a particular connection with the function of film music.

“The degeneration of the *leitmotiv* ... leads directly to cinema music where the sole function of the *leitmotiv* is to announce heroes or situations so as to help the audience orientate itself more easily.”<sup>54</sup>

We should not overlook Wagner's various innovations at his theatre in Bayreuth that are reflective of film culture. He was the first composer to plunge the audience into darkness while an opera was performed, and his introduction of the hidden orchestra pit is similar in concept to the invisible soundtrack of a film. He also had a double proscenium constructed around the stage, distancing the audience representing reality and the 'real world' thus contrasting the illusory world of the opera. There were no side boxes in the auditorium, this design forced the audience to rivet its attention on the production, which is similar to the modern day silver screen of a cinema. Ultimately, Wagner may not only be regarded as an 'elite' opera composer in the Classical tradition, but also the 'father' of the popular culture industry; he is a 'bridge' spanning the polemic divide associated with works of modernity. Intriguingly, the productions of modern musicals, especially the *Phantom of the Opera*, have been influenced by the film industry; this subject will be examined later in more detail.

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid. *In Search of Wagner*, p. 46.

In this study, we will be examining the parallels between Wagner, Andrew Lloyd Webber and *Phantom of the Opera* as our example of the modern musical. It is hoped by using this method we may establish the theory of modernity as evidence that the modern musical of the middle to late twentieth century had entered a 'Renaissance Period' and evolved into a new genre separate from Classical opera.

(...)

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